

BRANDED BY DESIGN

HOME CARE / HOME HEALTH EDITION

"If you want your business to break the mold within your industry, you need to avoid using the mold with your branding."

KEVIN HANSEN

BRANDED **BY DESIGN**

HOME CARE / HOME HEALTH EDITION

**A GUIDE TO DEFINING AND DESIGNING A
MEMORABLE, UNIQUE, AND LASTING BRAND
FOR YOUR HOME CARE AGENCY**

KEVIN HANSEN

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CHAPTERS

Preface	1
Chapter 1 Understandign the Nature of Branding	7
Chapter 2 Identifying Your Brand Essence	15
Chapter 3 Defining Your Right-Fit Audience	27
Chapter 4 “And We Shall Call it _____”	39
Chapter 5 Iconic Brand: With or Without an Icon	53
Chapter 6 As a Matter of Font	61
Chapter 7 Spectrum of Essence	71
Chapter 8 Picture-Perfect Brand	81
Chapter 9 Story Telling vs Feature Selling	91
Chapter 10 Branding’s True Measure of Success	105
Chapter 11 Branding Misfits and Right-Fits	119
Chapter 12 Deciding on Your Designers and Brand Partners ..	125
References	141

Preface

“Half of all small business start-ups fail by their fifth year.”

I would love to attribute this to one of the many professors who taught one of the many business courses I took through Idaho State University, however, only the statement - not the professor's name - has stayed with me.

I can, however, quote the Bureau of Labor Statistics and break down the current stats regarding how long new small businesses last:

“20% of small businesses fail in their first year, 30% of businesses fail by the end of their second year, and 50% of small businesses fail after five years in business. Finally, 70% of small business owners fail in their 10th year in business.”¹

In my experience of working with and observing thousands of businesses since 2002, disconnects within a company between branding (marketing, logos, content, video, graphics, images) and the company's intentions, sales messaging, or quality of services/products can plague a company regardless of how long they've been in business. I've seen such branding disconnects create significant obstacles for newer and decades-old businesses striving to remain relevant in their industry.

“Marketing Mishaps” are among the top four reasons small

businesses fail. (At least according to Investopedia².) So, while this book won't solve all the issues faced by a small business home care agency, the goal is to certainly help them get off to a better start than most... Or significantly improve the outcome of efforts in rebranding. This book will not just focus on branding, it will assist you in investigating aspects of the 3rd reason businesses fail ("Ineffective Business Planning") as you work through each chapter and guide.

Yes. This book contains a combination of high-level thoughts and familiar statements about marketing and branding sprinkled throughout the content of this book, but this is not a zero-action, all-hype book to energize you without direction. This is a guide with sections that invite you to get to work with and keep notes about ideas you and key leaders in your organization have regarding the Brand Essence of your home care agency. You'll be provided with tools just as beneficial to your new brand for the first time and when leveling up your brand communication after you've become a multi-state, multi-million-dollar success.

Variations of the Brand Pyramid in this book have been taught for decades. The version included here is my adaptation over the decades as I've helped hundreds of businesses brand, rebrand, update websites, and improve marketing efforts - and this edition of *Branded by Design* is written directly to home care owners. Some non-home care examples will be included to spur creativity and help you identify concepts; however, each concept will be brought back to ideas of how you and your team can apply them to your agency.

By the end of this book, I hope to have equipped and empowered you with tools to successfully design and continue improving on your brand and to overcome what my experience has shown to be the two greatest obstacles for businesses achieving a healthy brand foundation: Design Paralysis and Content Paralysis. When business leaders are uncertain when defining

their brand or become overwhelmed with options, paralysis from decision-making often takes root and prevents progress. You'll find that in the areas you take a deeper strategic and analytical approach to your purpose as a business, your reasons for making decisions about brand elements will be clearer. In the areas this book presses to more simplicity, you'll find yourself limiting the world of options to be more centered around your brand persona.

Remember: In the world of marketing and branding, there are far more things that could be done than what should be done when building your brand by design.

Acknowledgments

This book would not be possible without key figures who've influenced my life professionally, religiously, and personally.

My Mom, Susan, who

Chapter 1

Understanding the Nature of Branding

Up to this point, you've likely had a solo journey contemplating various aspects of a vision for your brand. Whether starting from scratch to build something new or working through the 7-year itch of re-evaluating your brand, I am excited for you and what you can potentially build using the tools in this book.

Before we dive into your brand design, though, I want you to take stock of what you've done so far and recognize what has influenced you up to this point. Consider all the ideas and emotions you've had through your independent process of deliberating your brand. What experiences in this industry have you had that guide you toward (or away from) certain considerations with your brand? What companies outside of the home care and home health space inspire you? With the main services and products you now use or plan to use for your business, what aspects of their brands have stood out to you?

You may not have thought much about what has influenced you to this point in your journey. Most business owners flow within a very natural path, mostly influenced by personal biases formed by experiences. The fact you've picked up this book tells me you are the type of owner who wants to as successfully influence your right-fit audience as you may now be aware your biases/experiences with other businesses have affected you. It also tells me you want to be in the top 10% of owners who've built

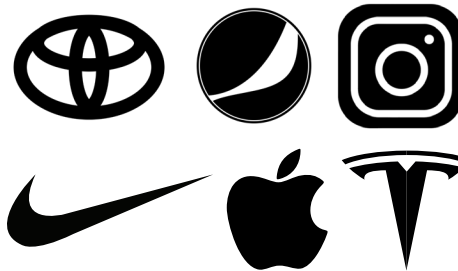
successful and recognizable businesses.

Let's do a little brand exercise to get your mind aligned with the staying power found in successful branding:

- "The best part of waking up, _____."
- "Give me a break. Give me a break. _____!"
- "Maybe it's _____"
- "I don't wanna grow up, _____."
- "Oh, I wish I were an _____."
- "I am stuck on _____ , _____"
- "What's in your _____?"
- "You're not fully clean, _____!"

Chances are, you didn't have to think twice when filling in the blanks for most (if not all) of these prompts - especially if you're an 80s kid, like me.

Great. Now, can you identify these brands based on their icons?



What feelings did you have as you reviewed each of these jingle and icon prompts? Almost involuntarily, you likely had a positive, neutral, or negative thought/feeling associated with each example. For any of these that did create an internal reaction, you know they run deep. For better or for worse, that is your perception of those companies.

That is their brand based on your experiences with them.

Quick History Lesson

The common term logos, messaging, and identities of companies are wrapped into is **branding**. If you enjoy etymology as I do, you'll learn this word originates from the Old Norse "brandr", which means "to burn". The modern use of the word has its roots in how early American ranchers originally set their cattle apart from others.

If you've watched a western or two or grew up on a ranch, you're likely familiar with how cattlemen would mark their herds by branding a symbol (their literal brand) on the sides of livestock. This symbol would also appear on signage marking the boundaries of their territory. Two aspects of this earliest form of branding are critical for you to hold onto throughout this guide to branding your home care agency – especially when we cover icon considerations in your business name, logo, and branding graphics:

1. **Simplicity**
2. **Uniqueness**

Granted, in the home care space you may not be branding cattle, however, agencies produce signage, swag, and other branded material that still must be identifiable out in the wild. Whether on the same street in billboards, office signage in the same town, or search results (the more common space of having various brands appear at high volume for consumers to view), agencies with similar names or brand imagery can be more difficult for your prospects to recognize.



Regardless of the medium (signage, swag, website, ads, etc.), your brand design needs to be established and follow a pattern so that those seeing it can recognize it, remember it, and revere it.

While I am asking you to focus on simplicity and uniqueness throughout your branding efforts, there is another overarching concept to understand about whether your branding has the potential for success:

Brands built more around their energy and the value promises shared with their employees and consumers are far more successful in gaining meaningful and lasting momentum in their markets. Branding efforts and imagery, however, that are disjointed, hodgepodge, and more of a mixed board of ideas will lead to consumer confusion, a lack of market reach, and create incredible challenges when competing for business. Beyond and far deeper than the visual aspect of branding are the experiences people have with your business. This experience burns your brand into their hearts and minds – for better or for worse.

Having been involved in branding and rebranding efforts with hundreds of businesses since 2004, I've heard myriad myths about branding. Let's go ahead and bust these myths before you continue reading.

Myth #1: The brand must include what you do as part of the name.

Reality: While the brand messaging will be supported with content specific to what you do, your company name and primary statements should remain simple and focused on the business WHY. More to come in the *"And We Shall Call It _____"* chapter.

Myth #2: The logo requires a graphic representative of your services/products.

Reality: Text-based logos – with no icons/graphics – can be incredibly powerful. If you have an icon/graphic in the logo, design something that reflects your WHY/Purpose, not the WHAT in your home care services. It would serve you better to go with an abstract icon in your logo and create meaning behind it than to join the myriad other businesses that load their logo with industry-related icons. More to come in the “*K.I.S.S. K.I.M.*” section.

Myth #3: Branding is just the logo, brochures, and swag.

Reality: Your brand is reflected in anything your consumers experience and express when interacting with your business. In various chapters, we’ll cover methods to verify that your brand is properly represented through fonts, colors, graphics, naming, marketing assets, and messaging.

Myth #4: Branding (referring to logo design) is a one-and-done project. A good logo will last decades.

Reality: Branding (logo, fonts, colors, icons, messaging, etc.) should be reviewed every 7-10 years. Every business in existence experiences growth and evolution, and your brand needs to remain current with the WHY and essence of your company over time. Outdated design can give consumers the impression your business may be falling behind. Not behind just in technological updates but also in consumer interests that evolve. Outdated messaging may not adequately reflect your current brand promise.

Myth #5: Changes to my brand could result in losing the customers I already have.

Reality: Only if the new branding no longer connects with them. If, however, you've effectively identified and defined your Brand Essence, this will not be the case. Communicating with existing consumers about the change is easier now than ever. If the rebrand is more on-point with your right-fit audience, it will more effectively attract new consumers and re-energize existing clients and caregivers.

Myth #6: Branding and Marketing are the same thing.

Reality: Such a statement would imply the marketing department is solely responsible for branding. As you'll discover in the "Identifying Your Brand Essence" chapter, the brand is influenced by every aspect of the company and reflected in the experiences your clients and caregivers have with your agency. Marketing is simply responsible for creatively communicating the brand to generate leads for your agency. Your brand envelops all the efforts of your business from promoting services to engaging in the community, to delivering reliable and excellent care to the internal experiences of your employees.

Myth #7: I'm just a small business. Branding is expensive and only for franchises and larger organizations.

Reality: Branding is critical right out of the gate for any business. Especially in the early months and years, a well-thought-out brand provides significant advantages as you pursue new clients, referral sources, caregivers, and prospective employees to build your team. The opportunity cost of not having a relatable and memorable brand far outweighs the investment into a legitimate brand design and strategy.

The Challenge

As you continue reading, free yourself of any preconceptions you hold regarding branding. For the next few chapters, let go of your current agency name or that list of names you may have

already tinkered with while drafting your business plans for a new home care agency.

After going through the next steps in this book, feel free to revisit the name(s) and evaluate how accurate they remain with the Brand Essence this book has helped you establish. Please, do not consider the tens of thousands of other home care agencies as reliable inspiration for names or how your logo should appear. Strive to work through this guide with a blank slate, then see what comes out on the other side.

The goal is to help you craft, develop, and design a brand that is your own, unique representation of your WHY and PURPOSE as an organization. This process won't be nearly as successful if you allow an echo or a mix of echoes from other home care/health agency brands to drown out your vision. Ideally, you will reflect on your WHY and be influenced by the perspective of what your right-fit client will relate to.

Note to Franchisees: *Yes. This book does have something for you. Read the first few chapters and reflect on how these concepts are evident in the branding of your franchise. If you haven't already, talk with your franchise reps to better understand the WHY behind the branding and explore where your personal WHY overlaps. This discovery of purpose you share with the franchise organization will bring you further along with the brand communication chapters.*

Heat & Uniqueness

Two factors that help ranchers brand their cattle with greater success are the heat and the uniqueness of the branding iron used.

Heat has everything to do with the intensity of the brand experience – whether positive or negative.

The next two chapters are all about “heat”. Your brand essence and defining your right-fit audience takes time, just as it takes time to heat a branding iron that will leave a deeper, more permanent mark. The “hotter” your brand essence, the deeper the impression from your brand will burn into the memories of those experiencing at any level with your company. Inadequate heat on the branding iron can result in a brand that quickly fades. Remember what they say about first impressions? With the right heat and application, it only takes 5-10 seconds to leave a brand mark on cattle that will last the life of the cattle.

Chapters 4-8 include steps to ensure your brand has unique visual elements that connect with your brand’s essence. Even with the right amount of heat, if your brand isn’t unique it could result in confusion between your agency and the other agencies with similar brand imaging and messaging. Uniqueness is required to effectively differentiate your brand through how it is represented graphically, tonally, and contextually.

If your words, graphics, and tone (music or vocal talent/energy) are unique and your brand essence has the right amount of ‘heat’, the result is an intentional, unmistakable, and lasting brand.

Chapter 2

Identifying Your Brand Essence

Chances are if you've already talked with a logo designer, they've leaned heavily into a graphics-led discussion to represent your company. Most designers promoting logo design services focus on creating a graphic based on a few short parameters versus designing a logo reflective of your WHY/purpose and Brand Essence. Online logo services like Fiverr and 99Designs may go a little further but only ask questions that require answers solely based on your biases.

- “Which designs do you like?” – Showing you several “stock” logo styles for a designer to reference to create a logo around your bias. (Oh, and they have you choose enough options it creates too broad of a spectrum of variance.)
- “What’s the name of the business?” – Without working through a strategic process of selecting a name.
- “What objects do you want in the logo?” – Without analyzing which (if any) icon would best emphasize and make your brand most recognizable or on brand.
- “What color(s) do you want in the logo?” – Without even touching on the psychology of color in branding.
- “What industry are you in?” – This generally leads to industry bias in any of the logo mock-ups you receive to choose from. This means your logo will likely include typical elements of designs commonly found in other (if not most) logos in your industry.

This chapter takes you deeper.

Rather than kicking off the process of branding your agency by asking you what names you like, what images you prefer, or examples of logos you like, this chapter guides you to the level of intent successful businesses go to with their brand. The essence of your brand is the sum of what you, your employees, and your clients experience through your company. Defining your Brand Essence is critical to influencing decisions made within your agency when providing and promoting your services. If you 'dial in' properly with your WHY and your right-fit clients, it will prove rewarding through successes in your lead generation and client onboarding efforts.

This book won't teach you to force your company to fit all branding aspects around a quickly designed graphic designated as your company's logo. Rather, you'll determine your brand first, then have what's necessary to work with a graphic designer to develop a logo that accurately reflects and resonates with your brand.

A conversation about your Brand Essence using the tools in this chapter should be limited to key decision-makers in your agency. If you're a solopreneur establishing a new home care agency, these steps are all on you – and potentially a short list of confidants you can turn to that can mentor you in the process. If you have business partners, you should work with them through these steps. If you have a team of managers, determine which aligns best with how you (as the Visionary/CEO) wish the brand to be reflected and include them in this process.

Those team members in key leadership roles that are on-point with the direction you have in mind for your organization will be productive to include in these steps as you see appropriate.

Chapter 10

Branding's True Measure of Success

What if...

- Kleenex tissues fell apart?
- Folgers really wasn't the best part of waking up?
- Chick-fil-A employees fail to say, "My pleasure" or didn't mean it?
- Verizon couldn't let you hear me now?
- Maytag's repairman was always busy instead of waiting for work?
- Allstate didn't have you in good hands?
- What if you weren't family when you're at Olive Garden?
- Your home care agency repeatedly fell short of delivering on your Brand Promise?

These are all aspects of a brand promise offered by various corporations, but what they come up with in a marketing workshop is not what defines their brand - rather it's the individual experience consumers have that define the brand.

"The true measure of success of a brand isn't found in how great your marketing and sales efforts appear. True brand success is found through repeatedly delivering on your Brand Promise, which you know you're achieving when current and past clients and caregivers (and others in your community) are regularly sending referrals to your agency."

Everything done up to this point in this book is for naught if those you serve and hope to serve or work within your community do not have experiences that make your Brand Promise their reality or perception of your brand.

Let's proceed further with the K.I.S.S. K.I.M. concept to demonstrate the difference between having a business you feel you've set up with a great brand and one that has a successful brand.



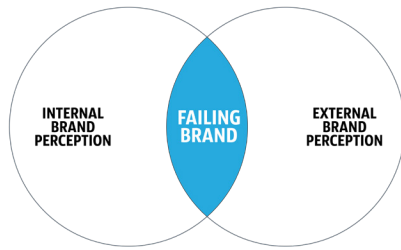
There are millions of Google search results that point to songs about incredible first kiss experiences, but not any I could find that point to songs about someone claiming how great of a kisser they are but having no "receipts".

"Most entrepreneurs fall in love with the wrong thing. They fall in love with their products and their business when they should be falling in love with their clients and customers."

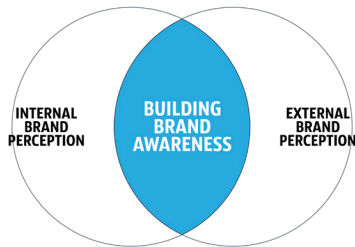
- Jay Abraham⁸

Effective, successful branding isn't only about having consumers express how great you are. It also has to do with how well aligned your expectations of experiences should be and the perception of those who've had interactions with your company. The more existing overlap between your brand definition and the public's perception, the stronger the brand.

Brands that are failing tend to have little to no overlap in what consumers say about the company and what the company exclaims about itself. A quick look at reviews of a business illustrates how on-brand or out of sync a business is.



Even starting as a new business, you should hope to be at least in the “Building Brand Awareness” range of success. The goal of this book is to have you create a brand identity and messaging that people can quickly connect with and accept as being your brand. Sadly, most businesses jump right into doing so and never build a successful brand.



The more you speak to your right-fit audience through your messaging and the more you deliver on your brand promise, the greater the overlap of internal and external perception. In this chapter, we’ll cover suggestions for how you can strengthen your brand’s delivery on brand promises, how to gauge external brand perception, and some cautionary tales of brand disruption from surprising sources.